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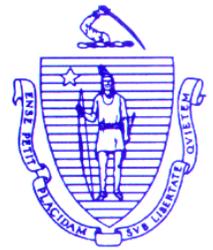
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September 9, 2017

Marine Fisheries Advisory

ASMFC Public Hearings & Comment Period on Menhaden Management

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is seeking public comment on Draft Amendment 3 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Menhaden. The document and a full schedule of public hearings are available at www.asmfc.org. Massachusetts' hearings will be held:

Monday, October 2, 2017 at 6 PM
Thayer Public Library, Logan Auditorium
798 Washington Street
Braintree, MA

Thursday, October 5, 2017 at 6 PM
Bourne Community Center, Room 2
239 Main Street
Buzzards Bay, MA

Draft Amendment 3 seeks to manage the menhaden resource in a way that balances menhaden's ecological role as a prey species with the needs of all user groups. To this end, the Draft Amendment considers the use of ecosystem reference points (ERPs) to manage the resource and changes to the commercial allocation method. In addition, it presents a suite of management options for quota transfers, quota rollovers, incidental catch, the episodic events set aside program, and the Chesapeake Bay reduction fishery cap.

The 2015 Benchmark Stock Assessment Report identified the development of ERPs as a high priority for Atlantic menhaden management. Menhaden serve an important role in the marine ecosystem as prey for a variety of species including larger fish (e.g. weakfish, striped bass), birds (e.g. bald eagles, osprey), and marine mammals (e.g. humpback whales, bottlenose dolphins). As a result, changes in the abundance of menhaden may impact the abundance and diversity of predator populations, particularly if the availability of other prey is limited. ERPs provide a method to assess the status of menhaden within the broad ecosystem context. Draft Amendment 3 provides a variety of reference point options, including the continued development of menhaden-specific ERPs as well as the application of precautionary guidelines for forage fish species.

Draft Amendment 3 also considers changes to the commercial allocation method given concerns that the current approach may not strike an appropriate balance between gear types and jurisdictions. Specifically, under the current allocation method, increases in the total allowable catch (TAC) result in limited benefits to small-scale fisheries, and to several states. Furthermore, the current method may not provide a balance between the present needs of the fishery and future growth opportunities. Draft Amendment 3 considers a range of allocation alternatives, including a

dispositional quota (bait vs. reduction), fleet-capacity quota (quota divided by gear type), jurisdictional quota, including a fixed minimum quota for each state, and an allocation method based on the TAC. In addition, the document considers five allocation timeframes including 2009–2011, 2012–2016, 1985–2016, 1985–1995, and a weighted approach which considers both historic and recent landings.

The Draft Amendment is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/AtlanticMenhadenDraftAmendment3_PublicComment.pdf or on the Commission website, www.asmfc.org, under *Public Input*.

Stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on Draft Amendment 3 either by attending a state public hearing or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on October 20, 2017** and should be forwarded to Megan Ware, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703-842-0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Amd. 3).

If your organization is planning to release an action alert in response to Draft Amendment 3, please contact Megan Ware at 703-842-0740, so she can work with you to develop a unique subject line to enable us to better organize and summarize incoming comments for Board review.

Final action on the Amendment, as well as specification of the 2018 TAC, is scheduled to occur on November 13 & 14 at the BWI Airport Marriott, 1743 West Nursery Road, Linthicum, MD. For more information, please contact Megan Ware of the ASMFC at mware@asmfc.org or 703-842-0740; or Nichola Meserve of MA DMF at nichola.meserve@state.ma.us or 617-626-1531.